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Central America — the Soviet view

In the past few days, Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee have attacked the administration's Central American policy by implying that it rests on CIA reports cooked up by the Agency to please the White House. That's a cheap shot. The administration has not needed intelligence reports to worry about Central America. What the Soviet press says is worrisome enough.

A clear signal of Soviet ambitions in Central America and the Caribbean came at the February 1981 meeting of the 26th Soviet Party Congress. There, the Soviets, for the first time, placed Cuba under the same protective umbrella they extend to all members of the "socialist community of states."

This protection was again emphasized in March 1981 at a Soviet-Polish Party meeting and, in April 1981, at the Czech Party Congress in Prague. Pravda, the Soviet Communist Party newspaper, reported it all.

Following that, the Soviets issued a clear warning to the U.S. to keep hands off Cuba. That was carried in November 1981 by both Pravda and the official newspaper of the Soviet government, Izvestia, as well as by the Soviet news agency, TASS.

The Soviets have shown a recent interest in Nicaragua, as well. Their journal devoted to Latin American affairs, Latinskaia Amerika,

had paid little attention to Nicaragua even as late as 1979, but the first three issues of the 1980 journal all had articles on Nicaragua.

One of those pieces reported a roundtable discussion by Moscow's Latin American experts. In it, the journal's editor, Sergo Mikoyan, revealed rising Soviet confidence in the effectiveness of externally stimulated and conducted armed insurrections in Latin America, especially Central America.

On Dec. 7, 1981, the Soviet Ambassador in Nicaragua hinted, for the first time, at Moscow's willingness to bring the Sandinista regime under the same protective wing now covering Cuba and other Bloc nations. Spanish and French news agencies carried that statement.

And on March 19, 1982, the authoritative Soviet foreign affairs journal, Novoe Vremia, described the Central American scene as a series of countries that could fall, one by one, to the "socialist system." That was the Soviet version of the domino concept — and the Soviet vision of the future. "Central America," the article said, "has become the epicenter of the political storms of the (Latin American) continent, a sort of compass."

Somebody should tell the House Intelligence Committee.